

Lipman Rajcher

The “*Poalei Agudas Yisroel*” Organisation

In 1924, two years after the *Poalei Agudas Yisroel* organisation was founded in Warsaw and in Łódź, a branch was also established in Częstochowa. Zalman Klajnberg, Józef Zultobrodzki, Binem Rabinowicz, Aaron Justman, Faywel Landsman, Zvi Cymberknopf and Lipman Rajcher. There were about four hundred members in the organisation, religious workers from all walks of life.

In those years, the Polish government imposed heavy taxes on merchants and on small tradesmen. Many of them literally faced bankruptcy. They began, therefore, to seek new sources of livelihood, mainly as workers. However, in this field, Jews encountered many obstacles. Heavy industry, which was then in its first stages of development, was almost completely blocked to the Jews, not to mention governmental positions, in which the Jews had absolutely no foothold. In this sense, the plight of the religious worker, wearing traditional garb, was sevenfold as hard. He was regarded as unfit and unable for any physical labour. Also the observance of *Shabbes* by a religious worker constituted a further problem, because in almost all the factories, and even those of religious Jews, they worked on Saturdays, based on [temporary] “conveyance-deeds” [rabbinical] permits. The religious worker needed great courage when he was, sometimes, forced to combat even against “his own kind”.

The “*Poalei Agudas Yisroel*” organisation, which was then established and whose motto was “*Justice according to the Torah*”, came to the religious worker’s aid and protested against the unfair attitude of religious factory owners towards their employees.

In the spiritual arena, the “*Poalei Agudas Yisroel*” organisation arranged evening lessons in Talmud, Mishna, [and] Hebrew Bible, a library with thousands of books in Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish, in the spirit of ultra-orthodox Judaism.

In the financial field, it arranged proper workplaces and a charity fund for small-scale loans.

In its communal activity, it took part in the elections to the “Sejm” and the municipality, together with its mother-organisation “*Agudas Yisroel*”, except for elections to the Jewish Community Council, in which each member was free to vote as he wished.

As identification with the Land of Israel grew and younger members of the organisation demanded more operations in the fields of training and *Aliyah*, this demand also found a deep echo in Częstochowa and some were sent for training to Łódź.

(The idea of *Aliyah* infiltrated the organisation and dozens of members emigrated to the land [of Israel] in the 1930’s, in different ways. Some were even able to bring over their relatives, in the course of time, thus saving them from the claws of the Nazis).